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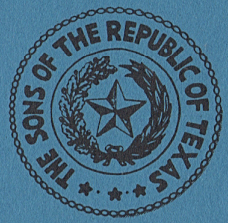
A Brief History of the

TEXAS NAVIES



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By

ADMIRAL SAMUEL MURRAY ROBINSON
U. S. Navy, Retired

A Brief History of the

TEXAS NAVIES.

~~ADMIRAL~~ SAMUEL MURRAY ROBINSON
U.S. Navy Retired

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Foreword

For many years the role of the Texas Navy in the history of our state was overlooked and almost forgotten, except for historians and for a few brief paragraphs in the history books.

When Admiral Samuel Murray Robinson, U.S.N., Ret., returned to his homeland, he was appointed to the Battleship Texas Commission, on which he has served with distinction. His first project was to promote interest in the Texas Navies. Through the cooperation of Mr. Lloyd Gregory, Commission Chairman, his efforts culminated in the founding and dedication in 1956 of the Texas Navy Museum on board the Battleship Texas. Housed there are Texas Naval relics, documents, drawings of the vessels and ports, photographs and paintings of it's officers and four scale models of the vessels in the First Texas Navy, and a growing library under the custodianship of Mr. F.A. Pellerin.

Since it's dedication, this museum has grown into a Texas maritine history and the thousands of Battleship visitors, especially school children are made aware of the importance of the role of the navy in Texas history.

On April 21, 1958, the Honorable Price Daniel, Governor of Texas, in ceremonies on board the Battleship Texas, reactivated the Texas Navy as a patriotic organization and as an arm of the Civil Defense of the State of Texas to be used in time of disaster and floods. Thus the glorious history of the First and Second Texas Navies is complemented by the "Third" Texas Navy.

This brief story of the Texas Navies was originally published in the November 1959 issue of TEXAS HERITAGE, through the cooperation of Mr. A. Garland Adair, Executive Director. It does not purport to tell the complete and detailed history, but shows how important the Navy was in the winning and maintaining of Texas Independence. The Sons of the Republic of Texas in printing Admiral Robinson's account as a supplement to Texas History books hopes that teachers will avail their classes of this added chapter in the teaching of Texas History.

Frank E. Tritico

President

Admiral Samuel Murray Robinson

BIOGRAPHY OF ADMIRAL SAMUEL MURRAY ROBINSON

Admiral Robinson was born August 13, 1882, in Eulogy, Bosque County, Texas, the son of Michael and Susan Linebarger Robinson. He was educated in the public schools, graduating at Dublin. He entered the United States Naval Academy in September of 1899 and was graduated in February, 1903.

His first assignments involved active sea duty on the "Ohio" and "Vermont." He had a special interest in gunnery and became adept in the handing of six-inch batteries and held a record for long range spotting at battle. In World War I, he served as Fleet Engineer and Aide on the staff of the renowned Admiral Hugh Rodman, Commander of the United States Atlantic Fleet. He afterwards held the position of Manager of the Pudget Sound Navy. Yard.

In 1931 he was appointed Chief of the Bureau of Engineering with the rank of Rear Admiral. In this capacity he introduced a number of innovations stepping up the speed of naval vessels. In 1939, Admiral Robinson was assigned to the Bureau of Ships, and it became his task to combine the Bureau of Construction with the Bureau of Engineering. He had the additional duties of Coordinator of Shipbuilding.

In 1942 the office of Procurement and Material was created and Admiral Robinson was named as the head of that office with the rank of Vice Admiral. He served in that position until the end of World War II, having been raised to the rank of full Admiral in August, 1945.

Upon his retirement, in 1946, Admiral Robinson assumed the duties of Administrator of Webb Institute in New York State, which position he held until returning to Texas in the fall of 1952.

In 1953 he was appointed a member of the Battleship Texas Commission, a position he still holds. On San Jacinto Day, 1956, he was made an honorary Admiral of the Texas Navy by Governor Allan Shivers.

Admiral Robinson is a member of the Military Affairs Committee of the Houston Chamber of Commerce; the Navy League; Naval Academy Alumnae; Military Order of World Wars and Naval Institute. He holds life memberships in the American Society of Naval Engineers; the Royal Society of Arts (London); American Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers; Honorary Life Member of the Naval Order of World Wars; and American Society of Mechanical Engineers. He also holds a number of service and campaign medals of both world wars. Among them are the Distinguished Service Medal; Officer of the Order of the Crown (Belguim); Grand Official of the Southern Cross (Brazil) and Honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

Admiral Robinson was married to Emma Mary Burnham on March 1, 1909. They reside in Houston and have two sons, James Burnham Robinson, of Washington, D.C. and Murray Robinson of Houston.

For his efforts in reviving interest in the Navy of the Republic of Texas and the establishment on board the Bat-

tleship Texas of a museum dedicated to the first and second navies of Texas, honorary membership in the Sons of the Republic of Texas was bestowed on Admiral Robinson at the 1957 annual meeting of the organization. Elected in 1960, he was invested February 25, 1961, as a Knight of San Jacinto, the order founded by General Sam Houston in 1843 while President of the Republic of Texas, as "a reward for the worthy," and revived by The Sons of the Republic of Texas to be conferred on those who have made a noteworthy contribution to Texas heritage.

A Brief History of the

TEXAS NAVIES

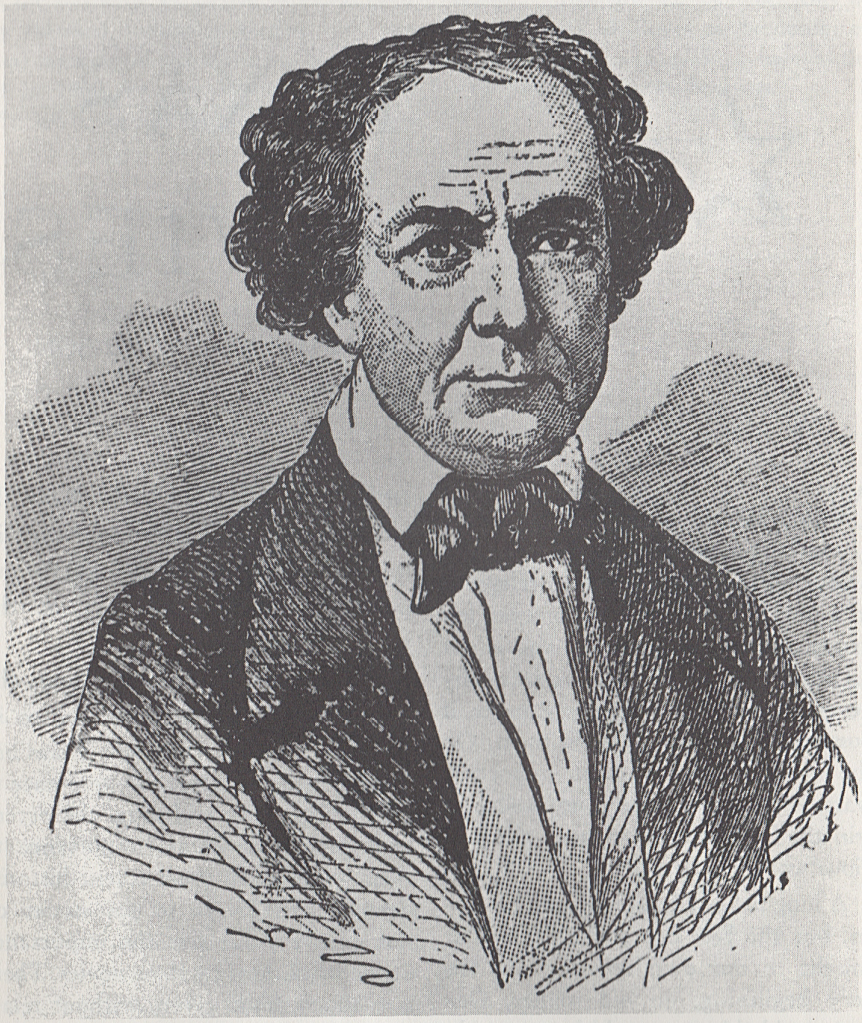
by Admiral S. M. ROBINSON

Naval history, since the beginning of recorded time, has followed a fairly uniform practice. It has been relegated to a position of secondary, or even less importance. The reason for this is not difficult to discover. Navies practically never settle wars. They only make it possible for armies to settle them. On the other hand, in most important wars, it would have been impossible to win the land victory without the previous work of the navy.

A long list of examples could be given, but the best one is the Civil War fought in our own country. At the very beginning, an old soldier, Gen Scott, said this war could be won only by the "Anaconda" method, and that is exactly what happened.

I refer the reader to any history of the United States and he will find page after page of battles, skirmishes, marches and counter marches but, relatively, he will find little about the work of the navy. To be more specific, he will find nothing to indicate the importance, nay the necessity of this work.

In the case of the Texas Navies, this peculiarity of history is carried to its ultimate. Most of the early Texas histories practically omit any reference to the navies at all and even the recent ones gave little or no importance to their work. Even those recent histories devoted exclusively to the navies do not clearly point out the importance of the work done by these navies. There is so much detail given, without relating it to the end to be accomplished, that the real aim becomes lost. It is again a case of the trees blacking out the forest. These books are very useful because they give information which is not otherwise available—in other words, they are fine reference books.



Mirabeau B. Lamar, President of the Republic of Texas

It is proposed in this article to limit the description of events to those which are the most important and to show wherein the navy made it possible for Texas to achieve its independence.

Texas had two navies which were really in no way joined together, as will be explained later.

I will begin by stating the accomplishments of each navy before giving in detail the proof of the statements regarding each navy. In this way, it will be much easier for the reader to follow the sequence than if the procedure were reversed.

The first navy made possible the battle of San Jacinto. What the history of Texas would have been if Gen. Houston had been forced to retreat to the Sabine we can only conjecture, but we can be sure that it would certainly have been a calamity of the first magnitude, not only to Texas, but to the United States. We only have to look at our maps to see that Texas was responsible for adding almost one-third to the area of the United States.

The second Texas navy had a very different task to perform. It prevented any seaborne or large scale invasions of Texas for the formative years that she needed to get her government and economy established on a safe and durable basis. It should be remembered that Mexico never gave up the hope of retaking Texas and kept up a practically continuous raiding of southern Texas, as far as Austin, on a hit-and-run basis. With Mexico in control of the sea, these invasions would have been on the grand scale and, again, we can only guess the results; but as a minimum, they would have done incalculable harm and retarded greatly the development of the Republic.

These are very broad statements and absolutely categorical so it is about time to begin presenting the proof. Again I will reverse chronology and start with the first navy in being and reserve the discussion of the events leading up to its creation to the end of the discussion. In this way the reader can readily compare the accomplishments with the statements above.

To begin with, both Texas and Mexico vastly underrated each other. The Texans never dreamed that Santa Anna would be in Texas in the early spring of 1836 with an overwhelming army. And certainly Tornel, the Mexican war minister, never expected Texas to produce a navy out of thin air in a matter of weeks. It was not that Tornel did not appreciate the value of seapower. He certainly did and made every effort to prevent Santa Anna from starting his invasion 'till Mexico could complete at least a part of her navy building program so as to be sure of controlling the Gulf Coast and insuring delivery of Santa Anna's supplies and reinforcements as he advanced. All this was to be done by water, first by the Gulf Coast and later up the rivers as the Mexicans advanced.

But after Cos's defeat at San Antonio, nothing could restrain Santa Anna. He knew that Mexico had a navy and Texas had none so he assumed that the necessary control of the sea would be maintained. This was probably the

greatest mistake any commander ever made, but over the years of recorded history, it has been seldom the case that an Army commander has properly evaluated sea-power.

In a matter of weeks, the Texans had created a navy. It consisted of 4 small ships, but the first one, The Independence, was off the coast of Mexico in early January and from that day till San Jacinto, the Mexican coast was in a turmoil. True, the Mexican navy was much larger at all times than that of Texas, but a navy on the defensive and which has to resort to convoys for its supply ships has to be many times larger than its opponent.

Further, the aggressiveness of these four ships literally stopped all commerce on the Mexican coast and the Mexican navy was reduced exclusively to performing convoy duty and was able to do very little of that. What was the result? First, all hope of landing a second large Mexican army on the Gulf Coast so as to pin Gen. Houston between two large armies had to be abandoned.

Second, Santa Anna did not receive his supplies of food and ammunition and this was in itself decisive because it soon reduced Santa Anna to a point where he had to bring the war to a conclusion. His army was on a starvation diet—a condition which could not be kept up very long. He had come overland this long distance from Mexico with a great quantity of supplies and this performance constitutes an all-time record in logistics, but he was soon reduced to living off the country and after the run-away-scrape there was not much left to live on. This accounts for his headlong dash to Harrisburg, where he thought he could capture Pres. Burnet and thus end the war.

His reasoning was faulty here in two respects. First, the capture of Pres. Burnet would have had no effect on the war as it would have had in a Latin-American country, and, second, he had become completely contemptuous of Gen. Houston and did not believe he could fight under any circumstances. He was soon undeceived. All this is on the negative side of the picture.

On the positive side, the supplies intended for Santa Anna went to the Texans. From the very beginning of the war, Gen. Houston had been beseeching the Texas government for ammunition and especially for powder. The smallest of the Texas navy vessels, the Liberty, captured the schooner Pelicano off the coast of Yucatan and this turned out to be an event of major importance as this vessel was carrying large quantities of munitions, especially powder, and this was gotten to Gen. Houston in short order and gave him the necessary powder to fight a battle—to wit, San Jacinto.

I suggest at this point that the reader look at a map of Mexico and note where the little Liberty was crusing. This, for a vessel of 65 tons displacement, constitutes an all-time high in audacity. The truth is, that from the very beginning, the Texas navy ignored the Mexican navy, and apparently proceeded on the assumption that it did not exist. Three of the captains of the Texas navy were experienced sailors from the Gulf Coast and the fourth was an ex-U. S. Navy officer, and their experience and daring certainly paid off. I would have to multiply the capture of the Pelicano many times before I could cover all the operations of this little fleet, but it would be a very boring and uninstructive process. Instead, let us survey the overall performance and see if it proves the statement that without the navy there could have been no San Jacinto.

First, the navy prevented supplies from reaching Santa Anna, especially food, thus reducing his army to a starving condition. Incidentally this is proved by the fact that when Filisola took the Mexican Army out of Texas he lost a large part of it by starvation. Second, the navy prevented the landing of a second Mexican army on the Gulf Coast, which would certainly have been a disaster of the first magnitude.

Third, the navy supplied Gen. Houston with both food and munitions without which he could not have fought a battle. Fourth, Santa Anna was forced by lack of food to gamble on moving a small part of his army (about one-fourth) at great speed ahead of his main body in the attempt to bring the war to a close. This gave Gen. Houston the chance for which he had been waiting and which he was quick to seize.

Now all of the statements in the above resume are well-known to historians and have been published but I have never seen them put together as a whole, in their proper perspective and it is only in this manner that they can be given their full importance.

In concluding this resume, it should be stated that the timing all the way through by the Texans was a matter of the greatest consequence. San Jacinto came just in the "nick of time." In a few months Tornel, with his new navy, would have been able to carry out all of his objectives in the face of the small navy opposing him. It would no doubt have been difficult but it certainly would have been done. This is an especially important point now that we are about to take up the events leading up to the creation of the first navy and I hope it will impress on all Texans the services rendered by certain men whose names are not even mentioned by most historians.

We will now complete our reverse chronology by telling how the navy was formed and giving some details of its operation. In this connection, a few dates and names are of great importance. Also, it will be necessary to go back to the beginning of the Revolution to get all the facts which led up to the creation of the First Navy.

The beginning of the Revolution not only found Texas without any real preparation, but its people were unfortunately divided as to plans, and all of them had complete confidence, based on previous experience, that they could easily defeat any forces that Mexico might be able to send into Texas. The defeat of Gen. Cos at San Antonio seemed to justify this optimism. How-

ever, they were soon to be made very painfully aware of the error of their estimate of the situation. They were confronted by a very competent general and one who was a past master of the science of logistics. His mistakes in underrating Gen. Houston and his lack of comprehension of the value of seapower have led most Texas historians to play down Santa Anna's real accomplishments, probably because of his extreme cruelty and ruthlessness. He moved an army of 5,000 men, completely equipped, into Texas and appeared before the Alamo on Feb. 23, 1836, at least three months before the Texans expected him.

The first organization of Texas called the Consultation, met on November 1, 1835 (not having a quorum before that) at San Felipe, and did a great many things; but the only two of great importance were the appointment of Gen. Houston as commander-in-chief, and the decision to acquire a navy.

History takes a queer turn at this point. Gen. Houston was one of the few people in Texas who realized what they were facing. He immediately issued orders to the commanders of all units of the Texas army to fall back to Gonzales with all their munitions and men. None of them obeyed this order and the result was tragic. Had it been obeyed, Gen. Houston, with the volunteers who were joining in, plus the hard core of the regular army, would have had sufficient force to make a successful stand against Santa Anna and Texas would have been saved the awful consequences of the invasion and the Run-Away Scrape. I stress this point because it had the greatest importance in fixing the responsibility of the Texas navy. It was up to the navy to save the Republic of Texas and it proceeded to do it. Had Gen. Houston been able to fight a successful battle in the vicinity of Gonzales, the importance—nay the absolute necessity of providing a navy—would have been very much reduced.

The Consultation, after its November meeting, almost immediately created a Naval Affairs Committee, consisting of Perry, Harris, and West, and, on Nov. 18, 1835, it submitted its report recommending the commissioning of privateers and the establishment of a 4-ship navy. After a wrangle with Governor Smith, the creation of a navy was approved and also the commissioning of privateers.

Many Texans hoped that private individuals would take over the navy job, thus saving Texas the expense of a navy, but the coastal towns had no such delusion. The result was that in early December, 1835, Commissioner T. J. Green was on his way to New Orleans to acquire a navy. When he arrived in New Orleans he was ably assisted by William Bryan, Texas agent, and Ed Hall, purchasing agent. Texas had no money and navies cost money. How these men raised the funds will never be known in its entirety. Commissioner Green was personally responsible for this miracle, but he was ably assisted by Bryan and Hall. All of them spent their own money, Green especially. Promises of all kinds were made; credit was guaranteed and the job was accomplished in an unbelievably short time. All Texans should list these three men high in the ranks of patriotic Texans. The following dates will show just how great was this miracle they accomplished.

The ex-Revenue Cutter Ingham was purchased, renamed Independence, armed, placed under the command of Commodore Hawkins (ex-U.S. Navy), and was cruising off the Texas coast by Jan. 10, 1836. I think this constitutes an all-time high in speed—less than a month from the arrival of Green in New Orleans, a vessel of the Texas Navy was cruising off its coast. Remember that this was more than a month before Santa Anna arrived at the Alamo.

The Brutus was purchased next and W. A. Hurd (Merchant Captain) placed in command.

The Liberty was next; she was the ex-William Robbins and was renamed Liberty, with Capt. W. S. Brown (ex-merchant captain) in command. Both these ships were off the Texas coast in February before Santa Anna reached the Alamo. These dates are extremely important.

The last vessel to be acquired was the Invincible (an ex-slaver) and Capt. Jeremiah Brown (ex-merchant captain) was given the command. He was off the Texas coast by March 12, 1836 and at a critical time as will be seen later.

I should like to pause here to add 4 more names to our honor roll—Commodore Hawkins, Capt. W. A. Hurd, Wm. S. Brown and Capt. Jeremiah Brown. The Brown family gets practically no notice in Texas histories and yet it contributed two of the 4 captains of the navy and the father, George Brown, fell at the Alamo. Is there any other family in Texas with an equal record? I very much doubt it, and certainly none that has been so much slighted by our historians.

In following the operations and history of these vessels, only events of special importance will be given in order not to becloud the accomplishments with too much detail. For those who are interested enough to follow the detailed activities of these ships, I refer them to "The Navy of the Republic of Texas," by Alex Dienst and "The Texas Navy," by Jim Dan Hill.

Owing to the forced retreat of Gen. Houston, preceded by the loss of our entire army and stores of munitions, the Texans were in desperate straits and desperate measures were needed to make good our deficiencies. These came from two sources—New Orleans and vessels destined for Mexico or the Texas coast for the Mexican army. The Texas navy was responsible for utilizing both these sources. Mexican naval vessels which would have been used to intercept supplies from New Orleans were forced to protect their own coast. Supplies captured by naval vessels ranged all the way from food to ammunition. Supplies captured at sea had a double effect; they aided Gen. Houston and hamstrung Santa Anna.

When the Independence, under

Hawkins, arrived off the Mexico coast in early January, it completely upset all the plans of the Mexican government. From that time on, until San Jacinto, no Mexican vessel was safe in sailing to Matamoras, let alone the Texas coast, without being convoyed by a naval vessel and the flow of Mexican troops and munitions to Matamoras was completely halted and not resumed for several weeks.

Among the list of things needed for Gen. Houston's new army was powder, and for some reason it was not reaching him to the same extent as other supplies. The Liberty, while cruising off the coast of Yucatan, fell in with the schooner Pelicano, which had left New Orleans on Feb. 25, 1836. Her manifest showed her to be loaded with flour in barrels, but a search showed that kegs of powder were stowed in the flour, the total amounting to 420 kegs, according to a letter from Gen. Houston. This was truly a gold mine for the Texas army.

Probably the next most important contribution of the navy was the cruise of the Invincible, under Capt. Jeremiah Brown, to Matamoras, where on April 3, 1836, he found preparations for a full-scale invasion of southern Texas, by sea, in full swing. Supplies had been obtained from New Orleans in American ships, mostly consigned by the firm of Lizardi and Company, who were Mexican agents. The Invincible broke up this preparation very suddenly. She drove the Mexican naval vessel Bravo (formerly the Montezuma) aground where she broke up; she drove back to port the Corres Segundo, which the Bravo was convoying, and captured the Pocket which arrived during the engagement. The Pocket was another Lizardi ship, with a false manifest, a number of Americans to be commissioned in the Mexican navy, and a contract to transport Mexican troops to the Texas coast. Somers, Hogan and Taylor are among the names of the Americans captured and we should place their names alongside Commodore Dallas and the Lizardi Bros. as Americans for Texas to remember—but not with any pleasure.

One would think that all these violations of neutrality would have been accepted as sufficient reason for confiscating the vessel and Capt. Brown did just that. Commodore Dallas, U. S. N., did not agree and later he arrested the Invincible and took her into New Orleans where the officers and crew were tried as pirates. Capt. Brown had managed to escape but was arrested later. In the meantime, those arrested were found not guilty of piracy and released, as was also Capt. Brown later on. However, the Texas government eventually was forced to compensate the owners of the Pocket. When one stops to think that practically the entire American population was in sympathy with the Texans, furnished them with troops, supplies, munitions, etc., it is surprising to find that the American navy, under Commodore Dallas, did everything it could to hamper the effectiveness of the Texas Navy. This could hardly have been due to a directive from the government, because it had shown its friendliness by stationing troops on the Sabine to intimidate the Indians in Texas and to prevent them from adding to the troubles Texas already had.

One must conclude that Commodore Dallas had a phobia against Texas and, in any case, we can definitely put him in the enemy camp, just as we can the Americans on the Pocket who were attempting to join the Mexican Navy.

The Little Liberty also aided in breaking up the invasion preparations by capturing the American schooner Durango, equipped with a false manifest and also destined to transport Mexican troops to the Texas coast.

It is very important to note these dates. We see that in early April, the Mexican fleet had become strong enough to threaten Texas control of the Gulf Coast. As will be seen later, this was very definitely the case. Since San Jacinto was fought on April 21, 1836, it can be seen that time had run out for the Texans. In a few weeks time, the Mexicans would undoubtedly have been strong enough to send munitions and food to Santa Anna and to place a second army on the Texas coast. In other words, we barely "got under the wire."

With the battle of San Jacinto, the picture changed radically. Santa Anna ordered his starving army out of Texas and while the Mexican government countermanded this order, Gen. Filisola kept up his retreat and by the time he reached the Rio Grande he had only a fraction of his force, starvation having taken its toll.

Equally important was the stopping of preparations for a sea invasion. The truth is that the Mexican government became so disrupted that it was many months before they were ready to resume the offensive. Up to now, Texas luck had held, but it rapidly reversed itself. The Texas Navy, in particular, suffered one blow after another till it disappeared entirely.

First, the Liberty convoyed Gen. Houston in the Flora, to New Orleans. The Liberty was promptly seized by her debtors and sold to pay them off. The next disaster was the loss of the Independence. On April 10, 1837 she sailed from New Orleans with W. H. Wharton, Texas minister to the U. S. on board; he was returning to receive the thanks of the Republic for having obtained recognition of Texas independence. On April 17, 1837, she arrived off the mouth of the Brazos where she encountered the Mexican vessels Libertador and Vencedor del Alamo. Each of these vessels was superior to the Independence. Capt. Wheelwright was further handicapped by his unwillingness to jeopardize the life of his distinguished passenger. In a few hours the Independence was placed in a position to be destroyed or to surrender, and the captain decided on the latter. This is the only occasion where a Texas vessel struck its colors to the enemy, and it caused great gloom, and, incidentally, led to many complications in connection with the prisoners, but that will not be followed here.

Gen. Houston had returned to Texas in late 1836 and had relieved Pres. Burnet on Oct. 22, 1836. He had appointed S. Rhoads Fisher as secretary

of the navy. Fisher had watched from the shore the loss of the Independence which left him with a navy of two ships. Immediately after San Jacinto Pres. Burnet had proclaimed a blockade of Matamoras, but it was ignored by all nations and the loss of the Independence rendered the gesture ridiculous.

The truth was that Tornel's navy was rapidly coming into being and Mexico was recovering from her confusion in the government caused by Santa Anna's defeat, so that by the end of 1836 the control of the Gulf was definitely lost to Texas and shortly after that Mexico established a blockade of Texas and stopped all commerce to Galveston. The coastal cities were frantic and were very insistent that something be done, but the question was what; although all agreed it must be soon because Galveston was really in a serious situation.

And now began the quarrel between Gen. Houston and the navy and it continued throughout the life of the Republic in greater or lesser degree. Only luck plus the personality of Commodore Moore of the second navy prevented this quarrel from causing a disaster of great magnitude to the Republic. This will be discussed in more detail later, but first some reason for this quarrel must be discussed.

Gen. Houston was one of the greatest Americans this country has ever produced. His combination of personal characteristics—iron constitution, iron will, complete fearlessness, complete self-confidence, and great military ability—certainly was not possessed to the same degree by any other man in the Republic. Even those Texas historians who have lauded Gen. Houston most have frequently taken a defensive attitude in regard to his maneuvers prior to San Jacinto. In fact, these acts were the wisest that the General performed in his whole life. He saved the Republic and the facts all justify this statement. He did it almost single-handedly. He received nothing but criticism from the two governments he served and none of his subordinates ever understood what he was trying to do.

First, after his appointment by Gov. Smith, he ordered all subordinate commanders to retreat to Gonzales where he was assembling an army. None obeyed and all the Texas army was lost. If his orders had been obeyed, Gen. Houston would have had sufficient force and equipment to make a stand against Santa Anna under conditions not much worse than those at San Jacinto, and would undoubtedly have won, thus saving the Republic the terrible invasion that it suffered. As it was, he uttered no recriminations but started building a new army and called for equipment in no uncertain terms, and due almost entirely to the navy, he got this equipment.

Knowing he had no chance against Santa Anna's army at that time, he began a masterful strategic retreat to give him a chance to create an army. He used the only thing that Texas had and that was space. In the meantime he started training a rebellious and mutinous army—an army which demanded that it be allowed to fight. Any other man but Sam Houston would undoubtedly have been relieved and a new commander selected, but fortunately this man's character was such that the move was not made and the Republic was saved.

For weeks he got no rest and little sleep, but rapidly he whipped his army into an organized force and watched for the opportunity to fight a battle on terms that were not impossible.

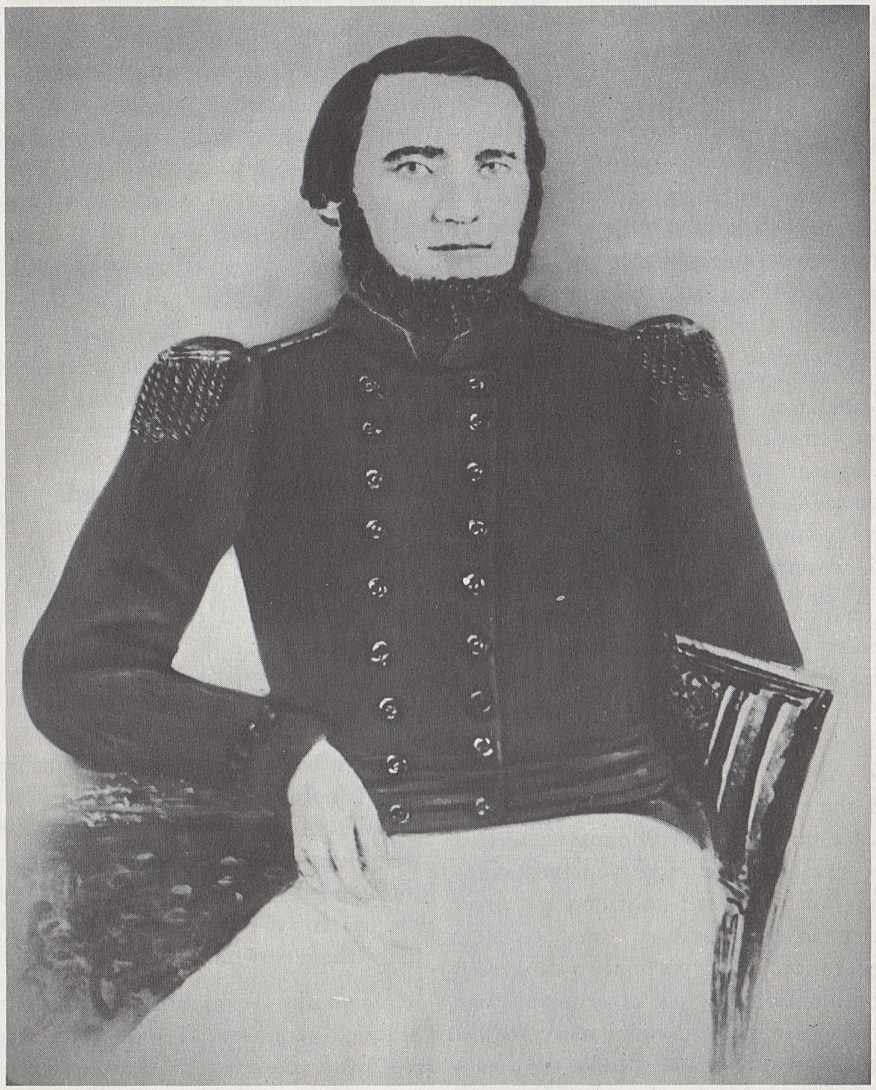
When Santa Anna, finally driven to desperation in his effort to end the war, made his dash to Harrisburg, Houston got his chance and seized it. He led his troops into battle and was in the forefront at all times in spite of his wounds.

No country can show a more heroic leader than Gen. Houston. I dwell at this great length on this man because it is necessary in order to understand his attitude toward the navy. Certainly no man ever showed less appreciation of the value of sea power and no one, not even Napoleon Bonaparte, used it to less advantage. Here we have a combination of self-confidence, great strength of character, and complete ignorance. This is certainly a dangerous combination. A less determined man would surely have given more weight to the advice of such people as Rhoads Fisher and Moore. It was Houston's one blind spot. But we should remember that most military men have made these same mistakes. The classic example is Napoleon Bonaparte who lost an empire as a result of it.

However there were other reasons which impelled Pres. Houston to look with a jaundiced eye on the navy. It cost money and Texas did not have any. He was used to raising an army which practically equipped itself and lived off the country so that it cost very little and he did not expect it to be in the field more than a few months. The idea of keeping a force at sea for a period of years and spending money for upkeep, was simply more than he could swallow. The fact that a dollar spent on the navy at that time meant many dollars saved by ensuring the Republic against a major invasion or interruption of its commerce simply was too much for him to understand. Added to all this was the fact that the people who controlled the two navies were just as strong characters as he was and you have a situation that spells nothing but trouble.

Yoakum in his history of Texas says that Houston ordered Moore to take his ships to sea from New Orleans and that Moore failed to do it. This was undoubtedly true, but he failed to add that Houston refused to let Moore have the money which Congress had appropriated to overhaul his ships to make them seaworthy.

No doubt Texas had more need to practice economy at that time than any other country in the world, but it needed even more a "breathing spell." By keeping its commerce moving and by avoiding seaborne invasions, the Republic went ahead at a rapid pace and it would never have had that "breathing spell" if it had not been for



EDWIN WARD MOORE
Commodore of the Texas Navy

Commodore Moore and the second Texas Navy.

And now, after this diversion, let us return to Sec. Fisher and the blockade of Galveston and other seaports of the Texas coast.

There was no question but what Texas was in a serious situation and Sec. Fisher was definitely "on the spot." With almost no navy (only the Brutus and Invincible) and faced with Tornel's new Mexican navy, his situation was indeed desperate. He discussed this with the President who insisted on keeping the two ships at Galveston to defend that city and for which they were not needed, but, more important, he made no effort whatever to build up the navy. Therefore Secretary Fisher took matters in his own hands and, on June 11, 1837, he took his two ships to sea and started harrassing Mexican commerce and Mexican coastal towns. In view of the fact that the Mexican Navy was several times the size of Fisher's force, this appeared to be a desperate if not foolhardy venture. It was certainly a courageous one, and the effect was immediate and electric. Mexico withdrew her ships from Texas, the blockade was broken and never resumed and the economy of Mexico was disrupted by the loss of her ships.

The audacity of these two ships was remarkable; they simply ignored the Mexican Navy and took prizes, ransomed cities, and generally raised "hob" with the Mexican coast. Actually the only chance that an inferior navy has is take the offensive.

It was certainly a great tragedy that such a bold and successful effort should have ended in such bad luck after the ships were apparently back safe at home. The end of this cruise, however, was also fated to be the end of the first Navy. On Aug. 26, 1837, the Brutus, with Sec. Fisher on board, returned and anchored in Galveston, but the Invincible was unable to cross the bar on account of the rough weather and her deep draft. Shortly after, two Mexican war vessels arrived; they were the Libertador and the Iturbide. The Invincible engaged the two vessels and signalled the Brutus for help. The latter grounded in attempting to get out of the harbor and was never recovered, but broke up in the storm.

The Invincible and the Mexican ships continued the engagement without anything decisive happening. The Mexicans tried to lure the Independence off shore so as to cut her off the Independence tried to lure the Mexicans inshore and almost succeeded, but actually lost her own rudder and went aground where she broke up. This was certainly a most inglorious end to the career of these famous vessels.

The President dishonorably discharged Sec. Fisher and ordered Commodore Thompson of the Brutus to be courtmartialed. Thompson solved his problem by dying. Congress took up the defense of Sec. Fisher and saved him from impeachment but he was forced to resign.

The importance of this cruise can hardly be overrated and had the two ships not had the bad luck to run in-

to a storm on their return to Galveston, it is very probable that much of the proceedings against Fisher and Thompson would not have taken place.

So far we have given no description of the four ships that comprised this first navy. They were all topsail schooners of small size. Three of them displaced about 125 tons each, and the Liberty about 65 tons. Scale models of these ships have been constructed and are placed in the Texas Navy Museum on board the Battleship Texas. Two of the ships models are made from actual drawings and the other two are from descriptions of the two ships.

In concluding the history of the first navy, mention should be made of the privateers commissioned by Gov. Smith and also private merchant vessels. Of the privateers the most famous was the Thomas Toby. In spite of her light armament (only two guns) and small size, she destroyed a great deal of Mexican shipping. Of the private vessels the Laura, Yellowstone, Flora and Flash were most noted.

The Laura began her career before the Revolution and was an important ship long after it ended. The Yellowstone was able to rescue Gen. Houston's army from the Brazos bottoms after heavy floods. The Flash rescued the Burnet government at Harrisburg and conveyed them to Galveston. The Flora took Gen. Houston to New Orleans after the battle of San Jacinto.

After the final destruction of the first navy, the coastal cities of Texas became very loud in their demand for another navy, but actually nothing was done at that time. However, Texas' luck held because Mexico managed to get herself embroiled with France during the years 1838 and 1839 so that Texas got a respite. In fact, the French captured the entire Mexican navy in 1839 so that both countries were on an equal footing; that is to say neither had any navy.

However, the coastal cities never stopped their agitation for a navy so that by the end of President Houston's administration a bill had been passed authorizing a new navy. Nothing was done toward starting it except the appointment of an agent to procure this navy.

With the election of Lamar in September, 1838, and his inauguration in December, the history of the second Texas Navy really begins.

The agent appointed by President Houston before he left office was Samuel May Williams. He was not the first appointee and there were other applicants, but the choice made was unusually fortunate. He made speed his watchword and in a short time had a new navy under construction or conversion in Baltimore. This constituted a remarkable achievement at the time since Texas credit was practically nonexistent and ships do cost money. The Republic owed a great debt to this man for he accomplished a monumental task in record time.

As soon as the navy was contracted for, President Lamar sent John G. Tod to Baltimore to supervise the work. He not only finished this work but stayed on in the navy, attained the rank of commander, and became Commandant of the Galveston Navy Yard.

The second Navy began under very auspicious circumstances. President Lamar was whole-heartedly in favor of it and so was Congress. Also, President Lamar was very wise in his selection of officers for this navy. His most important one was the choice of a commodore for the head of the navy and he could hardly have been more fortunate in his choice of Commodore Edwin Ward Moore for this position. He was a lieutenant in the U. S. Navy at the time and there was some criticism of the judgment of selecting such a young man, but events proved that he was unusually well-fitted for the position.

Here again I find it difficult to understand how a man who did so much for his country could have been given so little recognition, either at the time or at present. He deserves a place high on our list of important Texans. To show how little has been preserved in regard to him personally, Dr. Jim Dan Hill, in his history of the Texas Navy states that he was unable to find a photograph of him anywhere. This is really quite remarkable and I appreciate Dr. Hill's difficulty because the Battleship Texas Commission, in trying to build up the Texas Navy Museum, literally searched the libraries and museums of the country without success. After giving up the search, a photograph turned up in San Angelo in the hands of one of Moore's collateral descendants. It has been enlarged and is now in the Texas Navy Museum on the Battleship Texas.

He was a man of iron determination, never accepted a rebuff, and from the time he took command of the second navy in 1839 till the Republic became a state in 1846, the Republic was completely free of any danger of invasion from the sea, her commerce was uninterrupted and the Republic got what it badly needed—"a breathing spell." He did all this under almost unbelievable difficulties.

The honeymoon between the government and the navy did not last long. Lamar was a strong supporter but shortly after his first year in office, and about the time the navy was being assembled, Gen. Houston became a member of congress and opposed all of Lamar's plans. Lamar simply was not the man to cope with Houston—in fact, we might ask "who was?" Well, the answer was Commodore Moore. Their feud did not begin immediately but it certainly never ended.

Moore almost succeeded, due to fortuitous circumstances, in running his navy without money—or rather without Texas money. He was the most important diplomatic official in the state at the time and carried on negotiations with nearly all important foreign countries and with uniform success. He must have had remarkable powers of persuasion because he was able to persuade commissioners sent to displace him or even to arrest him, not only to refuse to do this but one of them even went to sea with him.

And yet the only known photograph of him in any public instit

is to be found in the Texas Navy Museum on the Battleship Texas. Fame and history certainly take queer turns at times.

The second navy itself suffered much the same fate as its Commodore. While the actual history is probably much better known than that of the first navy, owing to its being of more recent date, the importance of its accomplishments are even less well-known than that of the first navy.

No nation can make any progress if it has to remain continually at war and particularly is this true of a new country like Texas. The continuous threat of invasion from Mexico was a terrible drag on the progress of the country. While only a sea-borne invasion could have been a real threat and even such an invasion would almost certainly have been defeated, nevertheless it would have cost the country greatly in lives and money—many times the cost of the navy. And that such invasion would have been attempted had it not been for the second navy, there can be little doubt.

The recovery of Texas was an all-consuming obsession with Mexico, and one which she never dropped. Of equal importance was Texas sea-borne commerce. It was absolutely essential to the growth of the country and a second blockade of the Gulf Coast would have cost the country enough to build ten navies. Now the second navy prevented all of this and I think it deserves a high place in our history and not just a paragraph or a page.

Having outlined the accomplishments of the second navy, let us see what composed it. The steamer Zavala, ex-Charleston, was the first to arrive in March, 1839. She was followed by the schooners San Jacinto, San Antonio, and San Bernard, all of about 170 tons displacement. Next came the brig Wharton (ex-Colorado) and the brig Archer (ex-Galveston), each of about 400 tons displacement, and finally the Austin, a sloop-of-war (full-rigged ship) of about 600 tons. This was a very impressive navy and able to cope with anything that Mexico had or was likely to have.

Fine as this navy was, the question of money arose at once to plague it and never ceased to do so. The building of it was a strain on Texas finances. When it came to manning it for sea, Lamar found he had a new congress to face and his foe Houston was a member of it and immediately attacked all of Lamar's policies, including, or we might say, especially, the navy. However, after congress adjourned, Lamar succeeded in assembling the fleet in Galveston and began to consider how best to use it.

Texas luck seemed to hold for about this time Yucatan revolted and drove out the centralist government of Bustamente, but it was evident that if the Mexican government used its navy to blockade Yucatan and to land troops by sea, that province would soon fall as had all other opposition to the centralist government. So the fleet, or at least a part of it, was dispatched to Yucatan and thus began an informal alliance that lasted for several years, although it was interrupted from time to time. This was a most beneficial arrangement for Texas. It kept Mexico occupied with internal troubles and Yucatan paid the cost of operations of the navy; this cost was also partly defrayed by the capture of Mexican vessels and the ransoming of ports.

During all these years Commodore Moore walked a tight-rope. The British were anxious to get us out of the Gulf because we were interfering with their commerce; the Yucatecans were never under any illusions as to our reasons for supporting them and would have been very glad to come to terms with the centralist government if any reasonable terms could have been received. During most of this time, Lamar contributed to the confusion by trying to open negotiations with Mexico by sending James Treat, an American citizen, to Mexico. This unofficial ambassador never accomplished anything for Texas but he was responsible for Lamar's weak backing of Moore in his negotiations so that we lost the opportunity of detaching Yucatan completely from Mexico and making a hard-and-fast alliance with her. Mexico kept Treat dangling as long as she could and the critical time for us passed, never to be regained in its entirety.

It is difficult now for Texans to understand why Mexico was so long in relinquishing the idea of reconquering Texas, but they never gave it up until the United States invaded and occupied Mexico City so that she lost territory amounting to about one-third of continental U. S. Obsessions can be costly things.

However while no apparent progress was made, actually the navy had cleared the Gulf of Mexican ships and was keeping her so busily occupied that Texas was left in peace. And now an effort will be made to trace the general movements of this fleet, describing the few major engagements, but no attempt will be made to give the details of prizes taken, towns bombarded, difficulties with American authorities over recruiting, the one mutiny or the various cruises to the islands of the Gulf for revictualing, etc. The reader who wishes the details of this information will find them in two Texas Navy histories referred to earlier.

An attempt will be made to choose the most important events so that the reader can get a good picture of the 7 years of life of all or parts of this fleet. While this navy accomplished a great deal, as we look back on the events of Lamar's and Houston's (2nd term) administrations, it is obvious that the navy was not utilized to its fullest extent. It is almost certain that a tight blockade of Mexico and firm and continuous support of Yucatan and also the Republic of the Rio Grande would have resulted in complete capitulation of Mexico, resulting in full acknowledgment of Texan independence. This would have saved Texas much money and worry but both President Lamar and Houston were under the delusion that this could be accomplished by negotiation. Greatly as President Lamar favored a strong navy, he never

Samuel Rhoads Fisher, 1st Secretary of the Navy of the Republic of Texas

seized the opportunities of using it that were presented during the time of domestic disturbance in Mexico, following the war with France. Instead he sent James Treat, an American citizen, to Mexico and the Mexicans and the British managed to keep Treat dangling till the northern resistance in Mexico was crushed and it was not till Yucatan was on the point of collapse that Lamar acted and by this time Houston was in the Texas congress and Lamar's troubles really began.

However he did manage to get some funds for operating the navy, even in the face of Houston's bitter opposition. So finally in 1840, after many vicissitudes regarding recruiting, violation of American neutrality, shortage of supplies, officers, and men, Moore assembled the fleet and sailed for Yucatan, but even then he was handicapped by wait-and-see orders in regard to James Treat's activities. However, Moore proceeded to establish a base in the islands off Yucatan and opened negotiations with the Yucatecans. Without actually beginning hostile operations, Moore kept some of his ships off Yucatan ports and thus prevented the Mexican government from reinforcing their army in Yucatan and thus kept alive the revolt. Finally the Mexicans began to fire on Moore's ships (for good reasons) and broke off talks with Treat. Moore now began to support the Yucatecans openly, to seize Mexican ships and to open the Yucatan ports to commerce. He also negotiated for some much-needed funds with which to operate his fleet.

Also one of the indirect results of the operations of the fleet, with its interference with British commerce, was the negotiations of treaties with, first, England, and shortly afterward, Belgium and Holland, recognizing Texan independence. As time went on the Texas fleet became increasingly active —intercepting ships bound for Vera Cruz—and this brought on a crisis in the Mexican government.

However, all this activity had the worst possible effect in Texas. Congress which had usually been a steadfast supporter of the navy, began to believe that possibly it was not a necessity, and Lamar began again to try negotiations, but Mexico promptly killed this effort.

As a result, Yucatan negotiated with Lamar, Sept. 17, 1841, for the official use of the Texas Navy and what had been done unofficially became an open agreement. It was well that this was done because shortly after Houston was reelected president and any such agreement would have been impossible after that. Not only that, but Santa Anna, who had returned to power, was promising Yucatan the "moon." This did not deceive the Yucatecans but it did hold up active warfare.

Also the first blow from the Houston administration fell. Moore and his fleet were ordered to return to Galveston, but Moore seemed to be clever at dodging undesired orders and had taken his ships to Vera Cruz and he never did receive the orders. He returned to Yucatan and succeeded in reestablishing relations and collecting back pay. In the meantime, Moore and his ships con-

tinued to take prizes as they did for most of the seven years of their active service. A recital of these activities would require a book.

But on March 5, 1842, Mexico again invaded Texas—or rather, staged another hit-and-run raid. Texas rose up in its wrath and demanded action. President Houston ordered a blockade of Mexico and Moore seemed to have no difficulty in receiving these orders and they were immediately put into effect. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say they were continued with increased vigor.

But things never seemed to go entirely right for the fleet. At this point, Yucatan threw in the sponge and Moore's treasury was closed. Moore returned to Galveston, conferred with the president, outlined his needs for the fleet, especially the repairs to be made at New Orleans and the President agreed and issued orders for expediting the departure of the fleet from New Orleans; but—he did not give Moore any money although it had been appropriated. Moore used his personal credit, Yucatan money, and prize money and got some of his ships ready for sea. This was the first real overhaul some of these ships had had since commissioning.

Unfortunately Moore's efforts to raise money had taken considerable time and he still did not have all his fleet ready. After various efforts to get money, he went to Galveston himself and succeeded in getting a large appropriation from congress but that did not mean that Moore would get it—quite the contrary. This condition of stalemate went on for the remainder of 1842.

During this time Santa Anna had built up his navy and had abrogated all of his promises to Yucatan. The Yucatecans were desperate and when Moore offered to renew the old arrangement, they sent him enough money to equip some of his ships and he was on the point of sailing when Houston's naval commissioners, Col. James Morgan and William Bryan arrived on February 24, 1843. There had been a third commissioner, Samuel May Williams, but he refused to serve. These gentlemen had authority to sell the navy and relieve Moore of his command.

And now took place one of the strangest events in the history of Texas. Moore persuaded these commissioners to give up any idea of sale and they so reported to the President, whereupon orders were issued to relieve Moore of his command, put him under arrest, and send him to Galveston. Moore persuaded the commissioners to let him sail and Col. Morgan went with him. Just what took place or what agreements were made will probably never be known. Whether Moore promised Morgan to take the ships to Galveston or persuaded him that he should sail for Yucatan is still being debated.

In any case, Morgan certainly joined wholeheartedly the efforts that were made to save Yucatan. Yucatan immediately broke off negotiations with Santa Anna and on April 30, 1843 occurred Moore's most difficult battle. He had only the Austin and Wharton and was opposed by 2 steam frigates, two brigs, and two schooners. Moore never hesitated, but attacked the whole Mexican fleet and actually drove them into retreat. Later he was joined by 2 Yucatecan schooners and the Mexican withdrawal was accelerated. While this battle was indecisive, it did have the effect of breaking up the attempt to land Mexican soldiers on the Yucatan coast.

The following day, however, the Mexican fleet was increased by a very powerful steamer and the attempt to land troops continued. Moore again engaged the Mexican fleet and again it withdrew.

Yucatan seems to have been the chief gainer by these fights since they were able to make better terms with the centralist government and all Mexican troops and ships were withdrawn from Yucatan. But at the same time, the preparations for a new invasion of Texas was halted since the fall of Yucatan had been intended as the first step in this new invasion.

During this time events had also been happening in Texas. On May 6, 1843, President Houston published his proclamation declaring Moore and his men to be pirates and authorizing neutral nations to apprehend them and sent copies of this proclamation to Washington and London. Moore received a copy on May 28, 1843 and proceeded to settle his financial accounts which was done on June 24. On June 29, Moore and his ships sailed for Galveston and anchored there on July 14, and this ended the second navy. President Houston had succeeded in his long battle to destroy the navy.

But while this ended the navy, it did not end the Houston-Moore controversy which continued for years. First, Commodore Moore tried to obtain trial by a court-martial or any other court, but he was so popular that the President did not dare risk it. Moore was given an ovation on his return to Galveston. The President informed Moore and other principal officers that they were dishonorably discharged.

In 1844, by special act of Congress, Moore was given a trial. Moore was tried on 22 specifications and acquitted of 18; he was found guilty of disobedience of orders but no penalty was awarded. The President disapproved the proceedings and the battle continued in the press and in Congress.

Moore finally received an appropriation from Congress to cover his financial losses and this first appropriation was supplemented at a later date. However, President Houston (then Senator) had the last word after all; after Texas was admitted to the Union a bill was introduced in the U. S. Congress to take the Texan naval officers in the U. S. Navy with their rank and precedence, but Senator Houston blocked this effort without difficulty although a promise had been made by the U. S. Government, unofficially, that this would be done.

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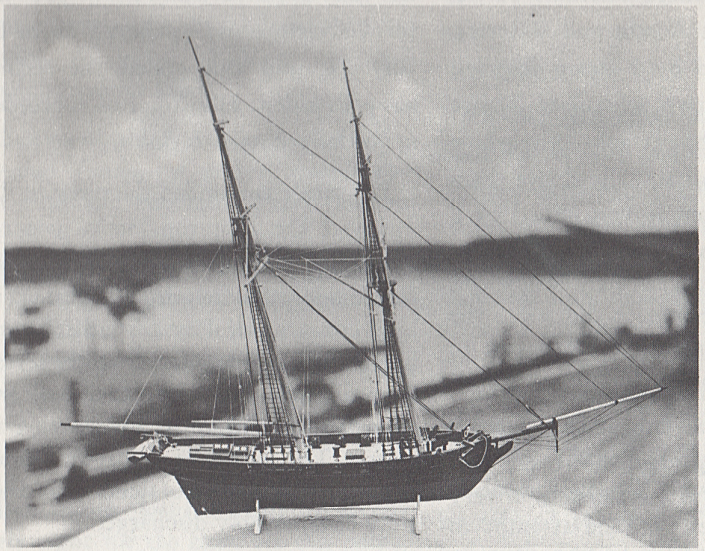
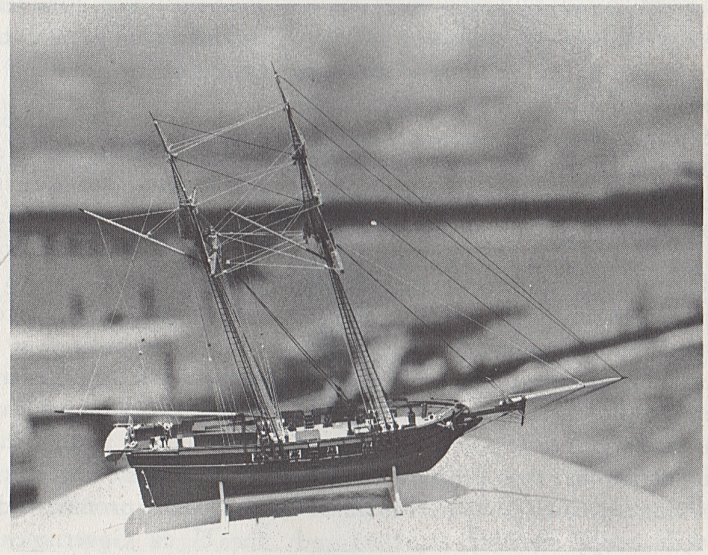
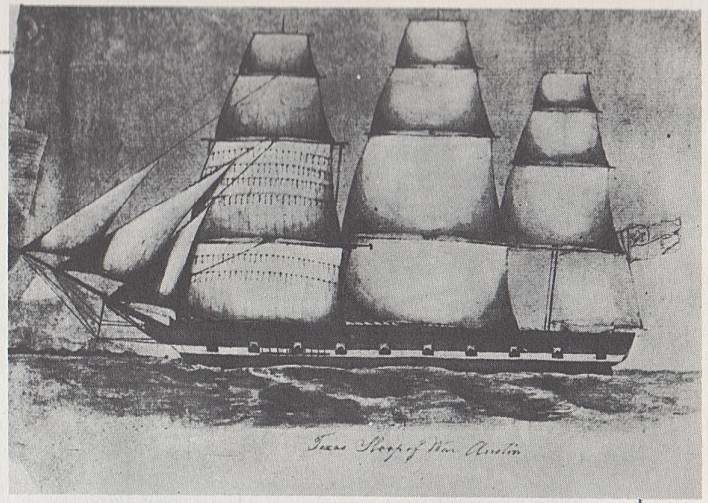


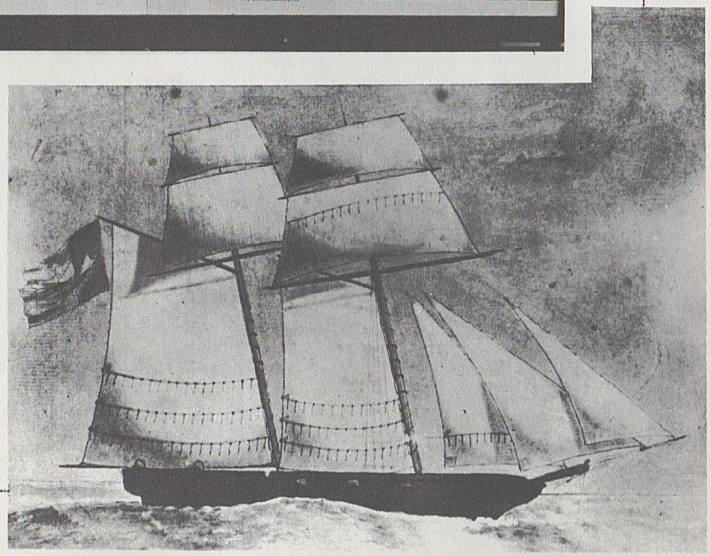
The "INVINCIBLE"

Scale models of Two of the First Texas Navy Vessels now on display at Texas Navy Museum aboard The Battleship Texas.



The "INDEPENDENCE"





The "SAN ANTONIO"

FORM 2081—A-1999-1045-4M

PROCLAMATION

BY THE

Governor of the State of Texas

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME:

WHEREAS, the Texas Navy played a vital role in establishing the independence of the Republic of Texas and in defending the shores and territorial waters included within its three-league boundary in the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Navy fought for the same rights of freedom and liberty which were won at San Jacinto on April 21, 1836, and for the boundaries which were first delineated by General Sam Houston on the sacred soil of this battlefield and thereafter approved by the First Congress of the Republic of Texas on December 19, 1836; and

WHEREAS, the memory and heritage of the Texas Navy can be preserved best by Texas citizens who are willing to continue by every lawful means the defense of the rights and boundaries of this State, it is advisable that the Texas Navy should be reactivated as a patriotic organization and an arm of the civil defense, and it is appropriate that this action should be taken on the date when Texans are gathered to celebrate the one hundred and twenty-second anniversary of the victory at San Jacinto and the tenth anniversary of the original acquisition and dedication of the Battleship Texas as the flagship of the Texas Navy.

THEREFORE, I, Price Daniel, Governor of Texas, do hereby proclaim:

1. That the Texas Navy is hereby reactivated as a patriotic organization and an arm of the civil defense of the State of Texas, with commissions of personnel and ships to be issued by the Governor.

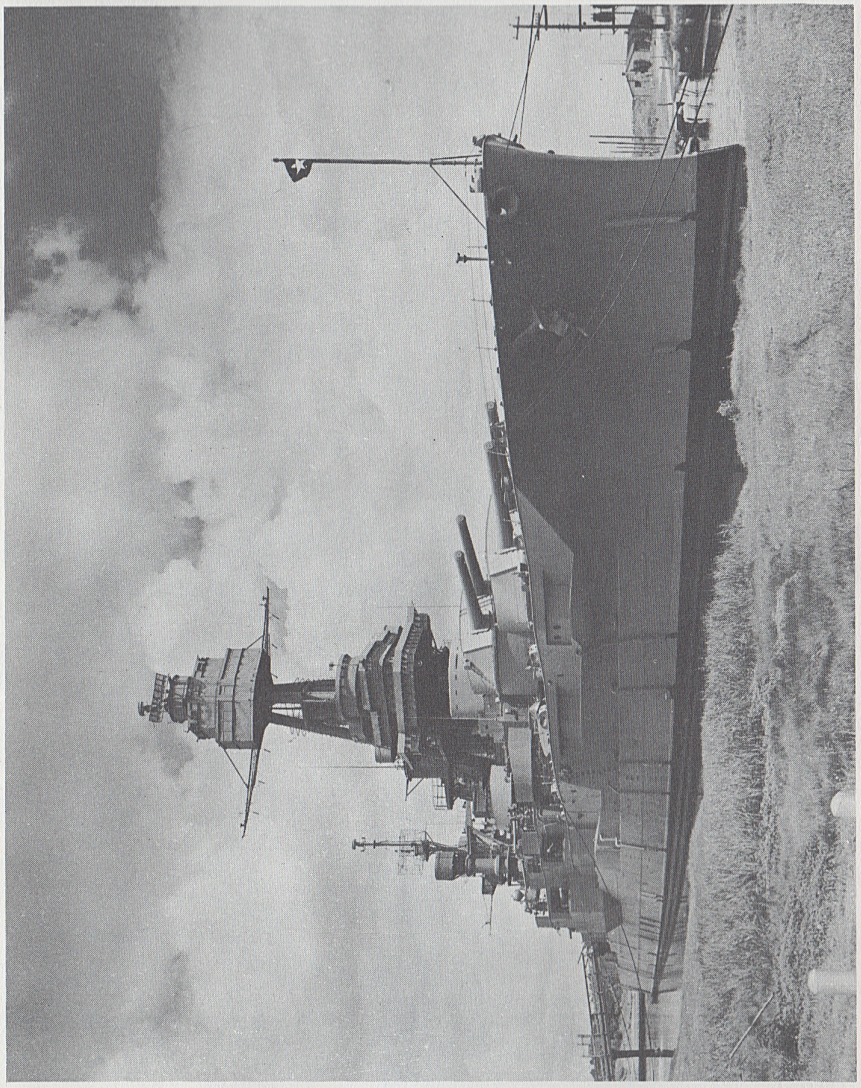
2. That the Battleship Texas shall continue to be the flagship of the Texas Navy, and all Texas Navy commissions heretofore issued to citizens of Texas and to others who served on the Battleship Texas shall continue in effect.

3. Future enlistments and commissions shall be granted to citizens of Texas interested in preserving the history, rights and boundaries of the State of Texas and maintaining the civil defense.

4. All Texas citizens owning power driven craft of any size are invited to join the Texas Navy by registration of their vessels and to participate in fleet maneuvers at the San Jacinto Battleground on April 21 of each year.

Done at San Jacinto on the deck of the Battleship Texas this the 21st day of April A.D. 1958.

Price Daniel
GOVERNOR



Battleship Texas